

2023-24 OTTER PELT TAGGING REPORT

PERFORMANCE REPORT STATEWIDE WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND SURVEYS

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Kansas has had a river otter harvest season since 2011. The season is open statewide concurrent with beaver season (Nov 15, 2023-Mar 31, 2024), and like beaver, otters may be trapped or salvaged, but not hunted. There was a 100 otter season quota for the first two seasons, but the season quota is now unlimited. A two otter per trapper bag limit was in place until 2019 when units were established with a one to five otter bag limit. The bag limit was increased to 10 in several units this season (Figure 1).

Like bobcats, river otters are CITES Appendix II (“look-alike”) species which are pelt tagged not because of their own lack of abundance, but because they look like species that are threatened or endangered. Pelt tagging is mandated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and is accomplished with tags provided by the USFWS Office of Management Authority, under the CITES Export Tag Program. In 2023, Kansas used white “KS ROTR” tags below number 0002700. A total of 47 KDWP employees and offices were issued tags for the season. These were mostly in or near the primary otter range, but tags were also maintained by regional and district offices as well as the Pratt Operations Office.

A total of 262 otters were taken in Kansas during the season, which is our second highest recorded harvest to date. The number of otters taken annually since the otter harvest season was established is provided in Figure 2. This figure includes those otters incidentally taken after a 100 otter quota was reached the first two seasons as well as a few otters confiscated as a result of exceeding bag limits during previous seasons.

Otters were taken in 8 of the units (Table 1). A bag limit of at least one is maintained statewide because nearly all otters taken in areas where otters are scarce are taken by trappers targeting beaver, and allowing trappers to keep these incidentals rewards accurate harvest reporting. The 29 counties from which otters were taken this season are shown in Figure 3, along with other counties from which otter have been taken since the season opened. Figure 4 shows the number of otters taken each day of the season.

Otters may be taken using trapping equipment authorized in K.A.R. 115-5-1 or salvaged during the harvest season. A total of 97 furharvesters took otters, and the total season bag per furharvester is found in Table 2. Table 3 provides a breakdown of the methods furharvesters used to take otters and the primary species they were targeting when the otter was taken. Table 4 provides the waterbody or location type from which otters were taken.

After the initial tag allocation, tag accountability was maintained via reports from KDWP employees or offices issued tags. After the season, each was responsible for inventorying unused tags and accounting for all tags they were issued. Unused tags were then destroyed, retained by each tagger, or returned to the Emporia office. One otter salvaged outside the legal harvest season this year is not included in this report.

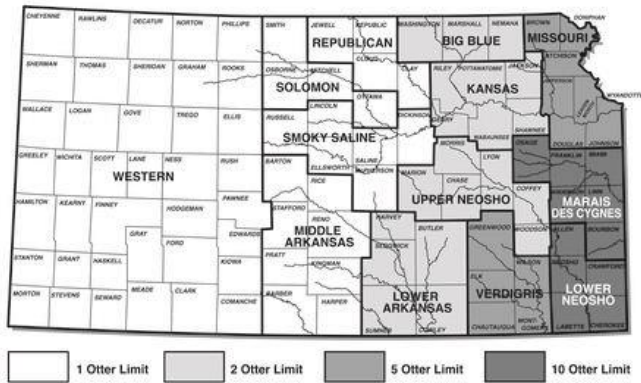


Figure 1. Otter management units and associated bag limits.

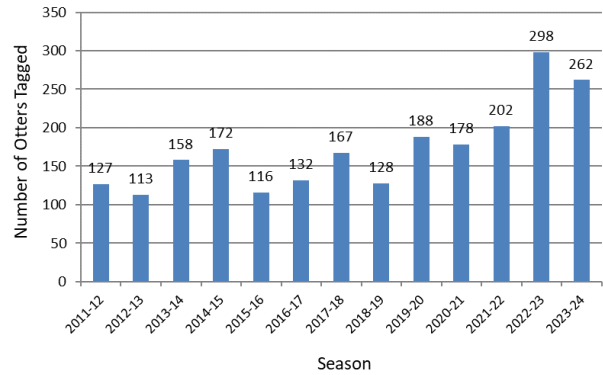


Figure 2. Number of otters pelt tagged annually since the season was opened in 2011.

Table 1. Otter harvest by management unit during 2023-24 season.

Unit	Bag limit	Harvest	Otter Harvest Counties	Counties in Unit	% Counties with Harvest
Lower Neosho	10	87	5	5	100
Marias des Cygnes	10	101	6	6	100
Missouri	5	32	7	8	88
Verdigris	5	23	3	5	60
Upper Neosho	2	7	3	6	50
Lower Arkansas	2	4	2	5	40
Kansas	2	7	3	6	50
Big Blue	2			3	0
Middle Arkansas	1			8	0
Republican	1			4	0
Smoky Saline	1			6	0
Solomon	1			4	0
Western	1	1	1	39	3
Total		262	30	105	

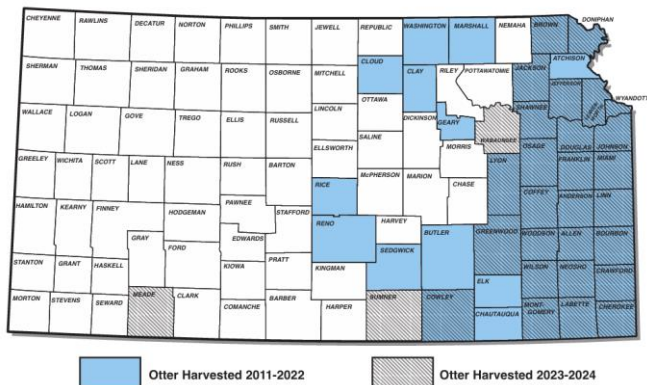


Figure 3. County of harvest of Kansas river otters.

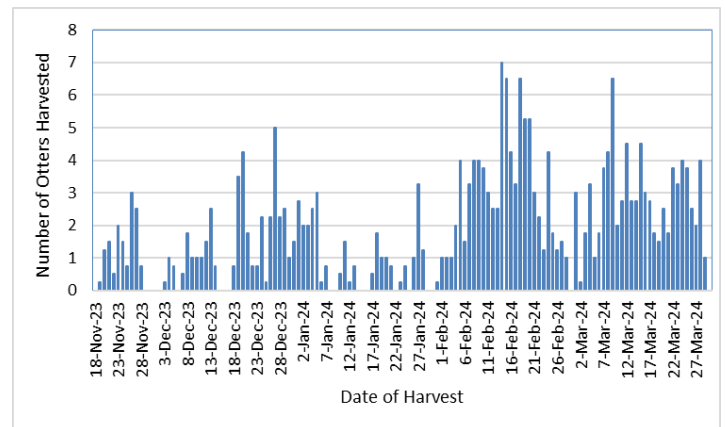


Figure 4. Reported number of otters taken per day during the 2023-24 furharvesting season (n=262).

Table 2. Number of furharvesters with various season bags of otters during the 2023-24 season.

Total Season Bag*	Number of Furharvesters	Percent of Furharvesters	Cumulative Percent of Furharvesters	Total number of Otters Taken	Percent of Otters Taken	Cumulative Percent of Otters Taken
1	50	52%	52%	50	19%	19%
2	16	16%	68%	32	12%	31%
3	6	6%	74%	18	7%	38%
4	10	10%	85%	40	15%	53%
5	3	3%	88%	15	6%	59%
6	3	3%	91%	18	7%	66%
7	2	2%	93%	14	5%	71%
8	1	1%	94%	8	3%	74%
10	5	5%	99%	50	19%	94%
17	1	1%	100%	17	6%	100%
Total	97			262		

*Any otters taken over the 10 otter bag limit were taken during nuisance trapping activities on an Wildlife Control Permit.

Table 3. Method of harvest and the primary species being trapped when otters were taken during the 2023-24 furharvesting season in Kansas.

METHOD	OTTER	BEAVER	RACCOON	Salvage	Unspecified	Number	Percent
Foothold Trap	19	8	1			28	10.7
Bodygrip Trap	153	60				213	81.3
Cage Trap	5					5	1.9
Snare	6	2				8	3.1
Salvage				6		6	2.3
Other or Unspecified		1			1	2	0.8
Subtotal Number	183	71	1	6	1	262	
Percent	69.8	27.1	0.4	2.3	0.4		100.0

Table 4. Location from which otters were taken during the 2023-24 furharvesting season in Kansas.

Harvest Location	Minimum Number of Unique Locations	Number of Otters	Percent of Otters
Reservoir/Lake	5	11	4
River	10	24	9
Creek	29	78	30
Pond	42	97	37
Strip Pit or quarry	8	21	8
Wildlife Area or marsh	6	19	7
Unspecified/Other	3	12	5
	103	262	100

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

This program receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex (in educational programs). If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, or if you desire further information, please write to: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Diversity and Civil Rights Programs- External Programs, 4040 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 130, Arlington, VA 22203